

**Blind Task Force Meeting
May 16, 2007
Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA)
2100 I-70 Drive, S.W.
Columbia, Missouri**

Members Present: Steve Berman; Donna Borgmeyer; Susan Ford; Chip Hailey; Karen Halsey; Heike Imler; Kent Kolaga; Patti Schonlau; Jim Sucharski; Jacob Wilson; Ella Wolfe.

Members Not Present: Paul Ajuwon (no transportation); Michael Evans (ill); Brad Hart (work-related).

Guests Present: Yvonne Ali; Anthony Blades; Jennifer Coy; Mike Merrick; Janice Stallings.

DESE Staff Present: Lori Conner; Heidi Atkins Lieberman.

Call to Order/Introductions: Patti Schonlau called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Steve Berman took roll call.

Welcome and Introductions: Introduced to the BTF was the new student representative of the BTF, Jacob Wilson; the new UMKC BSS, Janice Stallings; and Yvonne Ali, Supervisor of Missouri Instructional Resource Center for the Visually-Impaired.

Review and Approval of May 16, 2007 BTF Agenda: Ella Wolfe moved to accept the agenda as read; it was seconded by Donna Borgmeyer and unanimously approved.

- A. **Review and Approval of March 7, 2007 BTF Minutes:** Page 1, under "Members Present," add "Chip Hailey." Page 3, under Eligibility Criteria for VI Under the New State Plan, change "C" to read:
 - C. the visual impairment/functional vision loss adversely affects the child's educational performance.

A functional vision assessment is conducted by a teacher certificated in the education of students who are visually impaired (TVI) or a certified orientation and mobility specialist (COMS). The assessment must include the performance of tasks in a variety of environments requiring the use of both near and distance vision and recommendations concerning the need for a clinical low vision evaluation and an orientation and mobility evaluation. A learning media assessment is conducted by a teacher certificated in the education of students who are visually impaired (TVI). The learning media assessment must include recommendations concerning which specific visual, tactual, and/or auditory learning media are appropriate for the student and whether or not there is a need for ongoing evaluation in this area.

Page 4, under the "Outreach Committee" section, change the sentence to read: "The Outreach Committee met for a conference call on March 1, 2007. The minutes from the conference call are attached; and are also posted on the web at:

http://www.dese.mo.gov/divspecced/Blind/summary3_01_07outreachcc.pdf

The Committee is to review resource needs supplied by MSB to provide summer programs (RSB and AER may be involved).

Kent Kolaga made a motion to accept the above-changes to the minutes; Susan Ford seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

Current Blind Task Force (BTF) Membership Vacancies: There are currently three (3) membership vacancies of the Task Force on Blind Student Academic and Vocational Performance: one (1) Public School Building Administrator; one (1) Special Education Administrator; and one (1) Rehabilitation Council for the Blind Representative. It was noted that the Advisory Council of the Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) will appoint a Rehab Council for the Blind representative to serve on the Task Force. The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) will follow up on this.

Survey for Students with Partial Sight (20/70 – 20/199): Yvonne Ali, Supervisor of Missouri Instructional Resource Center for the Visually Impaired, reported that special education directors will receive a survey in the fall requesting a response to assist in planning regional and statewide efforts to serve Missouri students who are visually impaired.

Special Education Assistant Commissioner: Heidi Atkins Lieberman attended the BTF meeting. She recently became DESE's new special education assistant commissioner. She has worked for 16 years as a Legal Counsel and has been meeting with stakeholder groups to obtain input from them to better serve students with disabilities.

DESE has increased its funding for both an additional Blind Skills Specialists (BSS) position and an increase in BSS salaries.

GH Player Demonstration: Roselie Backer-Thompson was unable to attend the meeting to demonstrate the GH audio-player. It was reported that Book File and Braille Plus can be used with the player. Although Braille and Speak is outdated, it recently has been the only equipment available through APH until the Braille Plus Mobile Manager (a Braille note-taker designed to allow an individual to download digital books) was released last week, and is now available through APH at a cost of \$1,400.

Victor Reader Demonstration: The Victor reader was demonstrated and reported to be similar to a CD player with functions set up in the shape of a clock. The purchase price is \$64 for Members of Recordings for the Blind and \$199 for non-members. To access a book on the Victor reader, a key number (7323) will be supplied by Recordings for the Blind and Dyslexic (RFBDA).

Standing Committee Updates

Status Funded BSS Positions: This fiscal year balance is: 2,550.

Budget Requests for State Fiscal Year 2008:

- Blind Literacy Fund Appropriation: \$245,000
- Minus 3% governor's withholding: - 7,350 (if available)
- FY '08 Available Appropriation: **\$237,650.00**
- BSS Salaries (3): - 225,000.00
- Additional funding for BSS (3): - 8,700.00

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| • BTF: | - 3,500.00 |
| Planned Balance: | \$ 450.00 |

It was noted that a sixth BSS position has been approved for FY08 to serve the Rolla or Warrensburg area.

If available, the \$7,350 (gov with-holding) may be applied to the BTF budget for the Summit. There was a discussion regarding funding for the Vision Summit and consideration that MSB be a lead sponsor, in addition to professional development of the Vision Summit. The Task Force discussed drafting a letter to present to DESE for next year's budget that would include a line item for the Vision Summit.

Budget paid: \$4,500 for Vision Summit. Remaining balance: 2,550. The Task Force discussed different options for using leftover monies from the BTF: to purchase equipment that can be loaned out.

It was noted that the Heart of Missouri's BSS travel money is depleted. Donna Borgmeyer made a motion to exhaust the remaining BTF budget to the Heart of Missouri Blindness Skills Specialist; and if this is not possible, to give it to the Assistive Technology ETC program (Diane Golden). Jim Sucharski seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

The Task Force discussed adding a 15% gratuity for catered lunches. DESE will check on the guidelines for including the gratuity for the next BTF meeting.

Blindness Skills Effectiveness Committee: DESE will send an electronic copy of the BSS Scope of Work to the Committee. The BSS will be interviewed by the Committee to obtain suggestions on ways to improve their effectiveness.

Transition Committee: The Transition Committee will schedule a conference call to discuss Goal #9 of the National Agenda, "Transition from High School and Beyond."

Ad hoc Committee Updates

2007 Vision Summit Committee: It was reported that 270 people registered for the Vision Summit. The Committee will look at additional topics that were suggested for next year. DESE will provide district contact information to Dr. Ajuwon so that he and Kent Kolaga can distribute parent surveys regarding the needs of visually-impaired children around the state.

Steve Berman made a motion to continue holding the Children's Vision Summit in early March. Donna Borgmeyer seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved. Kent Kolaga moved that the Children's Vision Summit be an annual event. Steve Berman seconded the move and it was unanimously approved.

The Committee discussed adding a line item to include vendor exhibit setup fees; and will send letters to businesses, agencies, etc. requesting monetary donations for the Vision Summit.

The feedback from the conference attendees was generally positive and reflects a continued interest in the content of the Vision summit. The Vision Summit continues to be a chance for stakeholders in the VI field to learn new ideas and to interact with others in the field.

Eligibility Criteria for VI Under New State Plan: The eligibility criteria for VI

Under the New State Plan was adopted by the State Board in April 2007. There were no changes to VI eligibility -- term includes both partial sight and blindness.

MAP Improvement Committee: MSB staff and the visually-impaired from other states have been reviewing test items. The next meeting has been tentatively set for December 11, 2007 at the Jefferson Building, to work on the MAP test item issues: formatting, embossing, etc. Reviewers are needed to work with Heike Imler, Effective Practices. The Braille test version should include a Braille reader and a minimum of three reviewers, with test copies made for all reviewers to read separately. The Assessment Section will pay for one-night lodging for reviewers/readers. Susan Ford requested to be a reviewer.

Outreach Committee: Nothing reported.

Annual Study Committee: It was reported that Kent Kolaga was the only person who submitted suggestions/changes to the Annual Study. Dr. Sucharski requested from the BTF Chair that Mr. Kolaga's changes be accepted.

Governor's Council for Disabilities: Applications for the Youth Leadership Forum have been received. A disability program specialist will be hired to work on the Youth Leadership Program which is based at the Truman Building in Jefferson City. There is no longer a St. Louis or Kansas City area program.

Current Workshops/Events within the State:

Announcements: Missouri School for the Blind (MSB) placed fourth nationally in the Braille Challenge. Former and current MSB students are representing Missouri in the national games this summer in Colorado and Brazil.

A Blind Services summit will be held by MSB and Rehabilitation Services for the Blind. Representatives from every organization in Missouri that serves visually impaired people will be invited to attend. This event is tentatively scheduled to take place in late summer 2007.

The National Federation for the Blind (NFB) is having a Youth Slam at John Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland. Over 200 students, grades 9-12 will attend July 30 through August 4, 2007 to experience a touch of real life exposure to blindness issues.

Upcoming BTF Meeting Dates/Location: August 8, 2007, Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), Columbia, Missouri; November 14, 2007, Missouri School Boards Association (MSBA), Columbia, Missouri.

Susan Ford made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Jim Sucharski seconded the motion and it was unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:10 p.m.